

[O. H. Cross]

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FOLKWAY

Wm. V. Irvin, P. W.

McLennan County

District 8 [Folks?] [Tales?] Life History Duplicate

No. words 1456

File No. 240

Page No. 1 REFERENCE CONSULTANT: O. H. CROSS, WACO, TEXAS;
FORMER MEMBER OF CONGRESS FROM MCLENNAN COUNTY, 11TH TEXAS
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

“After I had left the law school of the University of Alabama I went to New Mexico in 1893,” said Mr. Cross, “and worked on a newspaper at [Deming?], published by Governor Ross of New Mexico. I was admitted to the bar in New Mexico and to build up a law practice, but New Mexico had been so hard hit by the panic of 1893 it was dead. I decided I would starve to death if I stayed there any longer, so I wrote my brother in Alabama to send me some money. He mortgaged an old cow he had, and sent me the money, When I got it I picked out a spot on the map about as far away as I thought my money would take me. I picked McGregor, Texas, as it was a small place near a larger place, Waco. I thought I would go to the smaller place, live there for a while, get acquainted in the county and then move to the larger place.

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"When I got to McGregor I looked around for a place that would do for a law office, and I found one, a little room up on a second floor. I went to the man who owned the building and told him I wanted to rent it on a credit. He asked me what I wanted it for, and I told him I wanted it for a law office. He said, "My God, you'll starve to death, but I admire your nerve. Go ahead and take the room." I went around to a secondhand furniture dealer and got a table and a couple of chairs and a cot on credit. I put the cot in one corner of the room and put a curtain up before it, and that was my bedroom. I got six loaves of bread for a quarter at a bakery, and a bucket of syrup at a grocery. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 I set the bucket of syrup in a trunk I had, and I would dip the bread in the syrup and eat it, and that was what I lived on. I had a law office, but there was not a law book in it. I sat up there day after day waiting for a case. There were three other lawyers in McGregor.

"At last one day the constable brought a man to me and said the man wanted a lawyer. One of the lawyers in McGregor had gone to Waco and he couldn't get back as it was raining and the road was impassable. The man who wanted a lawyer showed me the corner of a five dollar bill in his pocketbook, and said, "You see that? If you win, you get it. If you don't win the case, you don't get a thing." I got all the facts on the case, and I lay awake nearly all night studying the case from every angle. The next day when the case came up, and I did my best, and won it. The man I was employed by praised me, and paid me the five dollars. As I left the courtroom I heard people say, "Who is that young fellow? He sure is a good lawyer." Well, I certainly felt proud of myself.

"Hadn't been in McGregor when the city election came up. Some of my friends urged me to run for city attorney, though I hadn't been in the State long enough to have a vote. Two of the other lawyers were running, and I didn't think I had a chance, but I entered the race, and won it, I held the office about a year and moved to Waco, in 1896.

"In Waco I was appointed assistant county attorney under Cullen F. Thomas. The next term he didn't run, and myself and two other entered the race. I made some speeches, and people got to calling for 3 that fellow Cross. When election night came I was so worried

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about how the race would come out I couldn't keep still. I left my room and walked around, and directly I heard them yelling down where the returns were coming in, and I thought one of the other men had won. Then I heard my name. I had carried all the boxes in Waco, and when all the returns were in I won the race. Some of my friends grabbed me up and carried me around on their shoulders, The office had been changed and was now known as the district attorney. I held the office two terms, from 1902 to 1906.

“While I was in the prosecutor's office as assistant I saw one of the most exciting scenes in a courtroom I suppose there ever was. A doctor was charged with the killing of a girl by an illegal operation. Thomas and myself and Jim Ferguson and another lawyer who were acting for the doctor were sitting around a table in the courtroom. The doctor was sitting inside the railing with his back toward the crowd in the room. A brother-in-law of the doctor was inside the railing. A brother of the girl slipped up and shot the doctor in the side. The doctor tried to pull his gun, but he didn't have the strength to do it. The brother-in-law of the doctor began shooting at the girl's brother, who dropped down between the seats and was not hit. The crowd got down between the seats. If they hadn't, some of them would have been killed. Everybody was trying to get out of the way. The judge was waving a gun around and threatening to shoot, but he didn't. I ran to the county clerk's vault to get in there, but it was already full of lawyers. The windows were full of people trying to get out. Jim Ferguson came to me and asked to get his arm back in 4 socket. He had jumped over a railing, and slipped, but hung on to the railing with one hand, which had jerked his arm out of joint. I told him I wouldn't put anybody's arm back who would desert his client when the client was shot. This, of course, was in fun. The doctor died. Nothing was ever done to the girl's brother.

“When I went to Congress there were myself and two other men there who had all been in the same graduating class of Alabama University. The other two were Senator Bankhead of Alabama, and Kenneth D. McKellum, congressman from Tennessee, The class numbered thirty-five. Graduating classes were rather small in those days.

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"I was up making a speech one time, and when I was through a man came up and asked if I was kin ti the Crossess in Arkansas. I said no, I certainly was not kin to them. The man said, "By God, brother, I can tell you they are some of the best people there," and he went off mad, and I saw I had lost his vote. I decided that if anybody else asked me if I was kin to the Crosses in Arkansas, I would tell him I was. So later when a man asked me if I was related to a certain man by the name of Cross in Arkansas, I said yes, and he was one of the finest men there. The man who asked looked sort of embarrassed. I asked him what about that Cross in Arkansas[.?] He said, "They just hung him the other day."

"I had made a speech, and a Bohemian came up to me on the platform and said, "I have heard lots about you, Mr. Cross, but I didn't 5 know before you were such an ugly man."

"Coming back from Washington I drove through in my car. I stopped at Nashville, Tennessee. In the lobby of the hotel there was a fine looking woman around middle age. It turned out that she was raised in the same place I was, but she was a little girl at the time I was a student in the University of Alabama. [We?] students all wore uniforms then, and she admired me very much, and thought I was very goodlooking. As I came on I thought I'd tell my wife about that. I stopped at a little place in Arkansas for gas, and I saw a little boy walking around looking at me. He said, "You sure are a fat, ugly man, ain't you, mister?" Well, that ruined me. I couldn't believe in my good looks any longer.